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From

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Sub : Reply to questions in the consultation paper regarding DTH

For Direct to Home Broadcasting Services:

4.1.5 Whether the DTH operators should be specifically prohibited from dropping of channels from a subscription package for a subscriber for six months from the date of enrolment of that subscriber, if the channel continues to be available on their platform.

Yes, also there should not be any additional charges even if it is removed from the package opted by the customer. This should be made applicable to all types promotional offers by the DTH operators.

4.1.6 Within this period of six months, in case the channel ceases to be available on a particular DTH platform, then whether it would be appropriate to have a mechanism of reducing the subscription charges by an amount equal to the wholesale a-la-carte rate of that channel. Alternatively, can you suggest any other methodology for such compensation to the subscriber? Should such compensation be paid/adjusted even when one channel in a package is dropped, and it is replaced/substituted by another channel so that the total number of channels in that package is not affected?

The price of alacarte channel provided by the operator (inclusive service tax) have to be reduced from the package price. If the operator provides any other channel which is priced alacarte higher or equal to the channel dropped, the customer must be given the option either to select the new channel or get refund for the as per the above mentioned mechanism.

4.1.7 Whether the subscribers should also be required to subscribe to any channel/ package for a certain minimum subscription period as in CAS areas. If yes, what should be such minimum subscription period?

No. Considering the fact that the price of channels (which is much higher than the CAS price) the customers should be allowed to choose a channel/package for the period (in days also) he wants to view the channel.

4.1.8 Whether there is any justification for visiting charges for “no signal” complaint by the subscribers? If yes, should there be a ceiling on such visiting charges for complaints

of “no signal”?

No. There should not be any visiting charges for no signal because at the time installation itself the Dish is firmly fixed and there is little chance for its getting disturbed. If any such thing happens it is due to non firmly fixing the dish which is an installation failure.

4.1.9 Similarly, should any ceiling be placed in respect of visiting charges for repair and maintenance of CPE for DTH services? Alternatively, should DTH operators be required to offer Annual Maintenance Contracts (AMCs) to their subscribers?

Yes. It should be fixed at not more than Rs.100 per for visit after the installation guarantee period. Guarantee period should be fixed at minimum of 1 year. Alternatively the customer must be given the option exercising AMC at the time of visit.

4.1.10 Can you suggest some form of AMCs for DTH Service covering all aspects such as repair & maintenance charges for CPE, visiting charges, attending “no signal” complaints, etc.?

AMC charges should not exceed Rs.250 per year.

4.1.11 Whether the service providers should be required to make available toll-free numbers for recharge calls for prepaid accounts?

Yes. Toll free numbers must be made mandatory considering the time taken by the customer service executive to respond to our calls. Also some time limit must be fixed to attend call from existing customer by the customer service executive. And all the services should be responded by the single customer toll free number and there should not be any multiple toll free number/paid number for different requests by the customers.

4.1.12 Whether the request for suspension of service for full calendar months only should be entertained?

No. The customer must be given the option to temporarily deactivate his subscription for any number of days.

4.1.13 Whether tariff plan or subscription package changes requested by the DTH subscriber should be accepted and implemented immediately or from the start of next billing cycle for DTH subscriber.

No. Any change in the tariff plan or package must be made effective from the next day of request by the customer. Also there should not be any downgrade or other charges for change in tariff plan or subscription package.

4.1.14 Whether advance notice of minimum 30 days should be given by DTH operators to a DTH subscriber before terminating his existing tariff plan provided that no tariff plan can be terminated within the contracted period, if any, for that package or within six months of enrolment of that subscriber to that package.

Yes. Minimum notice of 30 days should be made mandatory. Also for any increase in tariff plan also there should be 30 days minimum prior notice.

Other Suggestions

Please consider the below suggestions while implementing the QOS as this difficulties are faced by the subscribers of DTH.

The DTH operators have refused to obey the TRAI request to reduce the subscription charges while deciding on interconnection charges in the month of April 2008. They increased the subscription charges and also removed some channels to separate packages.

In this regard to protect the customer interest since the customers are locked with the DTH operator since they have paid for the cost of the STB which is significant some kind of tariff regulation must be made by the regulator. I personally suggest that the cost at which the broadcaster provides the channels to the DTH operator should be the basis and maximum 30 % mark up to the cost to the DTH operator is to be allowed.

The introduction of CAS is for charging the subscriber only for the channels he wants to watch. Many subscribers of DTH are in non CAS areas who have not been given the benefit CAS channel rates and features. In the absence of digital cable through the country many have shifted to DTH. **In non CAS areas the customer cannot choose only the channel he wants to watch, when such technology is available in DTH it should be made mandatory.** Selection of channels by the customers on pick and choose basis apart from packages provided by the operators is the utmost requirement in the DTH.

Further the broadcaster is required to offer all the different packages and a la carte to the DTH Operators. Likewise the DTH operator must also be required to offer the same to customers. I.e The customers should be offered all the packages and a la carte channels which are offered to DTH operators.

Also the DTH operators have refused to allow the STB to be used to view DD Direct and other FTA channels in case the customers do not want to continue the subscription or temporarily do not renew their subscription. This should be strictly prohibited.

TRAI regulation of giving option of either rent or outright purchase of STB and dish is misused by the DTH operators. Most of them do not provide such options. Further Rent of STB is priced high. Further after initial rental period the customers are allowed to rent the

same STB for Re.1 per year. The above conditions signifies that it is a sale and not Rental scheme.

I further request the TRAI should make the DTH operators share the common infrastructure of transponders so that all the channels in India can be viewed by the customers of DTH. This has been suggested by the ISRO.

Interoperability of STBs must be made mandatory and every operators must be required to use a common software as prescribed by the TRAI so that only the viewing card is changed in case the customer wants to select other operator.

You can also refer the forums to view the difficulties faced by the subscribers of DTH namely

- 1.Saveondish - www.saveondish.com
- 2.Broadbandforum - broadbandforum.in

Also the New channels are not provided by the DTH operators due to their non entering of agreement due to difference in agreeing the amount of carriage fees demanded. In CAS and Non CAS the new channels are immediately but the we the subscribers of DTH cannot shift to CAS once incurring the high cost of STB of DTH.

I request you to make note of the above points including the other suggestions while making regulations.

Thanks for giving opportunity for giving our opinions.

Yours truly,

Sripathy K